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1999

# Kurosawa Retrospective in IWU Film Festival

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### Recommended Citation

Salowitz, Stew and Bowman, Barbara, "Kurosawa Retrospective in IWU Film Festival" (1999). *News and Events*. Paper 691.

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9 March 1999

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## **Kurosawa Retrospective in IWU Film Festival**

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. ? Japanese film director Akira Kurosawa once said, "There is nothing that says more about the creator than the work itself." In keeping with that philosophy, the Illinois Wesleyan University Asian Studies Team, in conjunction with interested students, is presenting a five-film festival honoring Kurosawa from March 25 through April 6.

The films are presented free and are open to the public. All will be shown in IWU's Center for Natural Sciences, Beecher and East Streets, Bloomington, and will feature an introduction by an IWU faculty member.

Kurosawa's ability to blend the traditional with the modern made him one of the most widely-known Japanese filmmakers to both western and eastern audiences. He died Sept. 6, 1998 at the age of 88.

The schedule, with introducing faculty and synopses:

**▲ Thursday, March 25, 7 p.m., Center for Natural Sciences room C-101 — "Rashomon" (1950).** Introduced by Stacey Shimizu, visiting instructor in English. A black-and-white winner of the Grand Prix award at the Venice Film Festival in 1951, "Rashomon" catapulted Kurosawa to international fame as a director. Set in medieval Japan, it tells the tale of a rape and death from several different and contradictory perspectives and stars Toshiro Mifune as the bandit. It was remade in Hollywood as "The Outrage," starring Paul Newman. (90 minutes)

**▲ Saturday, March 27, 2 p.m., Center for Natural Sciences room C-102 — "Seven Samurai" (1954).** Introduced by Tom Lutze, assistant professor of history. Often described as one of the most popular and influential Japanese films ever made, this action-adventure epic concerns a 16th-century farm community defended by a band of samurai warriors from a marauding army. Sword fights and battle scenes keep this lengthy (203 minutes) film fast-paced. Filmed in black-and-white, it stars Takashi Shimura and Toshiro Mifune as two of the samurai. It was remade as "The Magnificent Seven" and influenced the westerns of Sam Peckinpah.

**▲ Tuesday, March 30, 7 p.m., Center for Natural Sciences room C-102 — "Yojimbo" (1961).** Introduced by Barbara Bowman, professor of English. This black-and-white samurai film features the lone samurai who wanders into a grungy 19th-century community split into two corrupt factions warring with each other. Toshiro Mifune plays the seen-it-all samurai hero who cynically hires himself out consecutively to both sides. Its tone of gallows humor is associated with the samurai, who explains, "I get paid for killing." It also stars Eijiro Tono, Isuzu Yamada,

Seizaburo Kawazu. It was later made into "A Fistful of Dollars" with Clint Eastwood. (112 minutes)

▲ Saturday, April 3, 2 p.m., Center for Natural Sciences room C-102 — "Kagemusha" (1980). Introduced by Bowman. The co-winner of the Golden Palm award (the top honor) at the Cannes Film Festival, "Kagemusha" means "shadow warrior." It is a sweeping feudal epic about clashing feudal armies and a personal story of a thief who doubles for a dead warlord. By imitating the greatness of the warlord, the thief finds greatness in himself. It stars Tatsuya Nakadai, Tsutomu Yamazaki, and Kenichi Hagiwara. (160 minutes, in color)

▲ Tuesday, April 6, 7 p.m., Center for Natural Sciences room C-102 — "Rhapsody in August" (1991). Introduced by Ray Wilson, emeritus associate professor of physics. This color film looks back on a summer in Nagasaki, a summer of discovery for three generations. Four children are staying with their grandmother and are invited to visit their American cousins in Hawaii. But the grandmother's long suppressed memories of the atomic bomb's devastation of Nagasaki are awakened by this invitation. Old ghosts are confronted when an American cousin (played by Richard Gere) arrives. It stars Sachiko Murase and Hidetaka Yoshioka. (98 minutes)

### **About Akira Kurosawa**

Born in Tokyo in 1910, Kurosawa was the youngest of eight children of an army officer. After training at a western-style art school, he abandoned a career as a professional artist to enter films as an assistant director to Kajiro Yamamoto in 1936.

Kurosawa made his debut as a director with "Sugata Sanshiro" in 1943 and, at the Venice Film Festival, achieved international acclaim with "Rashomon."

"Ikiru" (1952), "Throne of Blood" (1957; based on Shakespeare's "Macbeth"), and "Sanjuro" (1962) are among his other memorable films. "Dersu Uzala" (1975) won a best foreign film Oscar and among his more recent films are "Ran" (1985; a Japanese version of "King Lear") and "Dreams" (1990).

### **About Illinois Wesleyan University**

IWU, founded in 1850, enrolls about 2,000 students in a College of Liberal Arts, College of Fine Arts, and a four-year professional School of Nursing. A \$15 million athletics and recreation center opened in the fall of 1994 and a \$25 million science center opened in fall 1995. The \$5.1 million Center for Liberal Arts, a facility housing 60 faculty offices, six classrooms, and other facilities for social science, humanities, business and economics, and interdisciplinary studies' faculty, opened in August 1997, as did a new \$6.8 million residence hall. The Carnegie Commission for the Advancement of Teaching promoted Illinois Wesleyan to a "Baccalaureate I" institution in 1994, a classification that places it among 159 highly-selective National Liberal Arts Colleges in the annual *U.S. News & World Report* rankings. *Barron's Profiles of American*

*Colleges*, another respected college guide, rated IWU "highly competitive +" in its latest edition.

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